21 Hockings 2-4,5 (1962-1977) 1980
AW50 Badaga AW50

175 plateau, from 1807,[17] were too demanding of the dues they had
652 paid the East India Company for the privilege of collecting, while
651 in some other years the commune headmen were too slack about the collection. The drought of 1805-1807, the general shortage of coin, the after-effects of Tippu's plundering of Badaga villages, all perhaps contributed to the decline in the payments, if not the fortunes, of the Badagas at this period.

175 Despite the British policy of fixing grain prices they did show
435 fluctuations from year to year. Sarada Raju's excellent study of economic conditions in Madras Presidency during the first half of
●458 the nineteenth century clarifies these fluctuations. He does not offer specific data for Coimbatore District (which then included the Nilgiris); nevertheless he is surely justified in his view that on a long-term basis the trend was similar in all districts (Sarada Raju, 1941, 227). As his statistical data for the Presidency adequately confirm (1941, 228–230),

> ... prices were high in the first few years of the nineteenth century. The country had just emerged from a protracted period of war and anarchy during which rival armies and plundering bands had laid whole districts desolate. Cultivators who had fled to the jungles and hills were but gradually returning to their neglected fields.... The period was also marked by a number of scarcities, more or less severe. The very first year, 1799–1800, witnessed a severe dearth and again between 1805 and 1807 occurred another famine, when prices ruled very high. After this prices were persistently low ... from 1807–8 to 1850–51 prices rose above the [economic analyst's] base only on seven occasions; and these were famine years.
>
> When the pendulum swung back, low prices ruled till 1812, when two dry seasons caused a scarcity which lasted till 1813–14. But with the coming of the rains, a lower level was reached and we hear frequent complaints of the "continued low price of grain".... All the Collectors remarked about it, affecting as it did the ryots' [peasants'] ability to pay the revenue (Sarada Raju, 1941, 231–232).[18]

N4
(731) While several seasons of adverse weather mentioned by Sarada Raju did give rise to famine conditions in Coimbatore District, which was one of the driest in the Presidency, it is very unlikely that famine also occurred on the Nilgiri Plateau at those times.

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Because of their wetter climate the Badagas have always been able to subsist while famine ravaged the South Indian plains (Grigg, 1880, 34). Even so, Badagas were undoubtedly affected by the occasional lowland famines and by fluctuations in the grain prices, since they sold their grain surplus in the nearby lowland markets. We need hardly point out that they would have made unusually good profits from sales in the famine years, but they might also have been taxed more heavily in those years.

MARKETING AFTER 1825

Around the year 1825 the British settlers, through their officials in Ootacamund, began to encourage traders from the plains to develop a market in that town and provided government-owned land for the purpose (Price, 1908, 233). By the end of 1827,

> ...advances had been made to [immigrant] natives to open bazaars...in the place so that 'the market is now well and regularly supplied with every essential article'...a public establishment of palanquin-bearers was kept up; and...villages were beginning to spring up at the foot of the passes (Hayavadana Rao, 1908, 115; compare Grigg, 1880, 288).

The traders in those early days were Chettis from Me:ṭṭupa:ḷaya, Ka:ramuḍu and other nearby lowland villages.[19] The market in Ootacamund was held only on Monday and Tuesday of each week; every Thursday the same traders held a market in Sirumuge, and on Friday were in Ka:ramuḍu. In these places they would collect the produce from the surrounding Chetti-controlled villages, then on Friday night they would start out by bullock-cart up the long Coonoor pass to the plateau. Their merchandise included rice, salt, crude sugar, coconut and other foodstuffs[20] As the climb was entirely uphill the bullocks rested all day Saturday and Sunday on the slopes and travelled throughout the nights. Later on in the century wealthy Chettis built some free rest-houses by the roadside for these journeys. The carts regularly reached Ootacamund on Sunday evening after a forty-eight hour haul. After two days of trading the Chettis left with their loaded carts around four each Tuesday afternoon. By Friday morning they were back in Ka:ramuḍu to repeat the weekly cycle and to barter

118 little, changing criteria in marriage arrangements have nevertheless made a pro-
583 found impact. The appearance of dowry transactions in a society which previously demanded only a type of bride-price is the most outstanding instance of a whole complex of changing criteria.

583 In arranging a marriage, the boy's family always pays honnu to the girl's
[584] family before the wedding. Honnu thus has the character of a bride-price; but this is not a good English translation for the term. Today the honnu is two hundred rupees; in the 1930's and 1940's it was Rs. 150 (Ranga 1934: 3; Vivekanandam Pillai 1937: 250); at the beginning of this century it was about Rs. 100 (Tignous 1911: 119); early in the last century it was "on an average between twenty and twenty-five rupees" (Harkness 1832: 42), or "15 to 20 rupees" (Ward 1821: lxxi).
●(458) With rising prices the honnu has also been increasing steadily; yet it is not really thought of as a bride-price at all. The Badagas are explicit that the money is to
583 be spent on gold ornaments with which to bedeck the bride when she leaves her
585 own home to join her new husband; for without certain customary ornaments the marriage cannot be performed. Thus the groom's family ensure that the celebra-
586 tion will go ahead by supplying the cost of these gold ornaments. At a later time, if divorce occurs, the wife has to return to her husband the ornaments or the Rs. 200, together with any other "gifts" of clothing or jewelry that he may have made (Harkness 1832: 116-17; Metz 1864: 86-87; Thurston 1909: I, 105-06; Tignous 1911: 119).

583 The system of paying honnu still continues, but dowry has become an additional requirement in some recent marriages. The general reason for this is that young Badaga men show much greater variation both in their family's wealth
(582) and in their own potentiality to earn than was true prior to this century. In earlier